

BUNNELL POLICE DEPARTMENT

Chief Jeff Hoffman

Departmental Standards Directive



TITLE:
MEDIA

SOCIAL

NUMBER:
1.2

PURPOSE

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The purpose of this directive is:

1. To provide Bunnell Police Department employees and volunteers with guidelines for their use of "social media" and to advise them when and how such use may affect their employment/volunteer status;
2. To ensure employees/volunteers use appropriate discretion in the use of references to the City of Bunnell and/or the Bunnell Police Department;
3. To prevent the unauthorized dissemination or release, either directly or indirectly, of information concerning crimes, accidents, or violations of ordinances; and
4. To make certain that all employees/volunteers treat as confidential, the official business of the police department.

This policy supplements the directives for employee/volunteer conduct contained in other Department directives.

DISCUSSION

Professionalism, ethics, and integrity are of paramount importance in the law enforcement community. Social media needs to assist the department and not hinder it. To aide in this concept the following policy shall apply.

POLICY

It shall be the policy of the Bunnell Police Department to ensure that employees/volunteers are reminded that their conduct both on and off duty must meet a high standard. Accordingly, this policy applies to the use of social media, both on and off duty, and explicitly includes postings made at home, and/or using personal internet devices.

PROCEDURE

The procedure of this directive establishes steps in a definite order of guidelines, rules and regulations to perform and to comply with the policy of this directive.

DEFINITIONS

Social Media: includes information disseminated electronically or posted to personal and social networking websites. Examples of social networking websites include, but are not limited to: Facebook, MySpace, Friendster, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, and all other sites that allow users to post personal blogs. The absence of, or lack of explicit reference to a specific website does not limit the extent of the application of this policy.

GENERAL SOCIAL MEDIA CONSIDERATIONS

1. The police department has a duty to protect the reputation and integrity of the department and its employees/volunteers, as well as to guard against liability and potential legal risk. Therefore the Department reserves the right to monitor social media.
2. Employees/volunteers are not prohibited from using social media however, when employees/volunteers use social media, they should consider:
 - The impact to their personal image;
 - The potential of affecting the City and the Police Department adversely;
 - The possible adverse consequences of inappropriate or illegal content on employment, cross-examination in criminal cases, as well as public and personal embarrassment.
3. When using social media off duty, employees/volunteers are expected to:
 - Exercise good judgment,
 - Decency and

- Common sense.

4. If an employee/volunteer posts or disseminates prohibited content as described below:

- A supervisor may require the employee to remove content that violates policy, and
- May recommend appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

SOCIAL MEDIA USE RULES AND PROHIBITIONS
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5. The following rules apply when using social media:

1. Employees **SHALL NOT** access or post to any social media websites during their tour of duty to include any paid breaks.

2. Employees shall not post, in any form, of the city seal or the Bunnell Police Department badge, uniform, patch, police department vehicle, identification card, symbol or other representation of the City of Bunnell, the police department or any other city department, is prohibited, as these items are protected official images and symbols of the City of Bunnell. (It is understood that outside persons may have access to an employee's network and the ability to post to their sites. Employees will not be responsible for actions of others however the employee will be responsible for removing any material that violates this policy or any other policy immediately.)

NOTE: Exceptions to this policy may be considered when it is in the best interest of the department, with prior approval of the Chief of Police or the Chief's designee.

3. Employees will not post or disseminate the following types of criminal justice information; it is explicitly prohibited: confidential, sensitive, or copyrighted information, data from an ongoing criminal or administrative investigation including photographs, videos or audio recordings, photographs of suspects, crime scenes, traffic crashes, arrestees or evidence, information concerning restricted areas of police facilities, official department training and work-related assignments, personal statements about an on-duty use of force incident, and comments related to pending prosecutions.

NOTE: These restrictions will not apply to official department websites operated and maintained by the police department.

4. Do not post or disseminate content that is inconsistent with the duties and responsibilities of a police department employee/volunteer or that could be reasonably interpreted as having an adverse affect upon department morale, discipline, operations safety of staff, or perception of the public. For example, unprofessional, unbecoming, illegal, unethical, sexual, violent, harassing, racist, sexist, or ethnically derogatory comments, pictures, artwork, videos, material or other references all tend to undermine the public trust and confidence required by employees and volunteers of the police department.

5. If an employee/volunteer chooses to reveal his/her connection with the police department, he/she must ensure that any information, statements, views, and/or opinions are solely that of the individual and not of the City or the police department. While using social media, employees/volunteers are prohibited from acting, speaking, or writing in an official capacity as an employee/volunteer, from representing that they are acting, speaking on behalf of the police department, and from representing or presenting the interests of the police department.

6. If a non-supervisor is included in a supervisor's social network, the supervisor must ensure all content, including any content the supervisor posts about him/herself or any other city employee/volunteer, including elected officials, is consistent with this policy and with his/her role as a supervisor.

7. Any employee/volunteer becoming aware of or having knowledge of the dissemination of information or a posting in violation of the provisions of this policy shall notify his/her supervisor immediately.

8. Failure to comply with the above guidelines may result in discipline, up to and including termination.

NOTE: Authorized exceptions to the above guidelines may be permitted by the Chief of Police for operational needs of the department. Clarification on appropriate content, if needed, will be directed to the employee's/volunteer's Supervisor.

SOCIAL MEDIA POST CONSIDERATIONS

6. The following guidelines are provided to assist in determining if a posting or comment is appropriate: These are examples of some appropriate and inappropriate postings, but are not all inclusive.

Appropriate Example

1. Matters of public concern are department matters of interest to the community as a whole, whether for social, political or other reasons;
2. Examples of local issues of general or public concern include the budget, spending priorities, any question scheduled for a public hearing, illegal discrimination, official corruption, official impropriety, malfeasance on the part of government officials, misuse of public funds, waste of public funds, fraud, abuse or gross mismanagement, inefficiency in managing and operating government agencies, violation of law, local elections or public safety;
3. Examples of state or national issues of general or public concern include election campaigns, elected officials, legislation, national security, budgets, foreign policy, or any topic of broad public interest or debate; and

Inappropriate Example

1. Personal grievances and negative comments on the internal operations of the police department, or specific conduct of employees that impact the public perception of the department is not protected First Amendment speech. Such comments may subject an employee/volunteer to disciplinary action if they constitute insubordination or if they violate any City rule, policy or directive or any written directive of the police department.

ISSUES OF GENERAL/PUBLIC CONCERN

7. Employees/volunteers may comment on issues of general or public concern (as opposed to personal grievances), as long as the comments do not:

- Disrupt the workplace;
- Interfere with important working relationships or with the efficient work flow;
- Undermine public confidence in the employee/volunteer, the City of Bunnell or the police department.

Approved

Jeff Hoffman
Chief of Police
Bunnell Police Department